Adult Back to School

PLANNER

Planning Series

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This publication is available to order on-line at **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop**. Additional copies can be ordered from the Learning Resources Centre by telephone at (780) 422-9750 or by fax at (780) 427-5775.

Career Practitioners

This booklet is part of a planning series that includes *Career Planner* and *Education and Training Planner*. It is written at a lower literacy level.

This booklet is written for adults who are planning to go back to school. It will increase their personal management, learning and work exploration, and improve their ability to make life/work decisions. It will help them:

- understand how returning to school may require them to make changes in other areas of their life
- explore time management, problem-solving, stress management and balancing life and school
- understand the importance of asking for help and ways to do it
- consider the advantages and disadvantages of various training options that suit their needs
- think about how personal decisions impact them and others
- create a short-term action plan to prepare for their future
- connect with further information and resources.

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This information was accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. Labour market information and educational programs are subject to change, and you are encouraged to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education and employment decisions.

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Related Topics: Where you can go for more information

The Planning Series consists of three books—*Career Planner, Education and Training Planner* and *Adult Back to School Planner*. Each contain information, exercises and resources to help you make career and training decisions.

The Table of Contents lists the topics covered in this planner. Are you interested in getting information on other topics related to planning your career, going back to school, or education and training? Then get a copy of the publications listed below or visit the websites. For ordering information, see *Resources* at the end of this book.

Topic	Resources
Career choices	• *Career Planner: Choosing an occupation* • **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo**
Workplace research	• *Finding Out: How to get the information you need to make the choices you want*
Education and training choices	• *Education and Training Planner* • *Time to Choose... a post-secondary education program* • **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/edinfo**
Going back to school	• *Education and Training Planner*
Budgeting for school	• *Education and Training Planner* • *Money 101: Budgeting basics for further education* • *Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting basics* • *Study Your Options* series • **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/studentsfinance** • **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships**
Job search	• *Job Seeker's Handbook*

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What This Planner Will Do for You

Maybe it's been a while since you've been a student, but you've decided to go back to school. Congratulations! You will learn more about the world. You will learn more about yourself. You will think a lot about the kind of work you want to do. You will meet new people and make new friendships. You will set goals and work hard to achieve them. You're headed in a new direction.

This planner will help you plan your way back to school. It provides:

- practical information and ideas on a wide range of topics
- answers to some of the more common questions about going back to school
- information on getting support and help from your family
- tips on money matters and information on finding child care
- practical advice on studying and time management
- examples of how other adults have dealt with going back to school.

This planner has a lot of information but you don't have to read it all at once or from front to back. Pick the chapters that interest you the most and read them first. Then come back to the other information when you have time.

We recommend that you fill out My Back to School Plan in the next section. This will help you set goals, search for information and decide what steps you need to take to make your return to school a successful one.

Take your time reading through the information in this book. Use the checklists. Do the exercises. Read the tips and personal stories. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to someone. There are lots of people who can help you. See *Resources* at the end of this book for more information.

Getting Started: Making a Plan

Going back to school can be both exciting and scary. As a student you're going to have classes and homework. But for an adult student, there's more to going back to school than studying. Other people may depend on you. That's one of the reasons you're going back to school. You want a better life for yourself and your family.

To know where you are going and what it takes to get there, it's a good idea to have a plan. A plan makes it easier to see how far you've come and where you still need to go. A plan will help you get through this change in your life.

On the following pages is a worksheet called My Back to School Plan. It will help you focus on your strengths, your goals, your needs and your resources. Use the information in the planner to help you fill it out.

Write down the dates you plan to complete each stage and record your progress. Use this book to get information on topics you're not sure about. Check out the other suggested resources. If you have new questions, add them to your plan, then find the answers.

This worksheet is just the beginning. You might want to start a file and use it to store all the information you find.

If you create a good plan and stick to it, you should find it easier to go back to school. Measure your progress by checking off the items you have completed. You'll see how far you've come and know where you still have to go.

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My back to school plan

Steps to get ready to go back to school	What I've done and still need to do	Date to be completed	Done (✓)
Think about where I want to go with my life. Find out about my skills, interests, values and traits.	*Example:* • Take a career planning workshop. • Talk to counsellors. • Call the Career Information Hotline. • Get a copy of *Career Planner: Choosing an occupation.*		
Find out more about occupations that interest me.	*Example:* • Spend a day in the workplace I'd like to be in. • Find out what jobs employers need done. • Talk to counsellors. • Call the Career Information Hotline. • Get a copy of *Career Planner: Choosing an occupation.* • visit the website **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo**		
Find out more about the program that I need. Check out different schools.	*Example:* • See a career counsellor. • Visit a school. • Get a copy of a school calendar. • Call the Career Information Hotline. • Get copies of *Education and Training Planner* and *Time to Choose... a post-secondary education program.* • visit the website **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/edinfo**		
Find out how much this will cost (There will be many different costs).	*Example:* • Call the Registrar's office to ask about tuition costs. • Figure out how much housing and child care will cost. • Read *Taking Care of the Kids* in this book. • Get a copy of *Education and Training Planner.* • Get a copy of *Time to Choose... a post-secondary education program.* • Visit the website **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/edinfo**		

Steps to get ready to go back to school	What I've done and still need to do	Date to be completed	Done (✓)
Figure out where I'm going to get the money.	*Example:* • Look at my own resources. • What do I have saved up? • What money can I earn during school? • Read *Money Matters* in this book. • Check out student funding. • Visit websites: **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/studentsfinance** **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships**		
Fill out application forms for school.	• Get copies of *Education and Training Planner* and *Time to Choose... a post-secondary education program.*		
Fill out application forms for student funding.			
Talk to my family and work out a plan for all our needs.	*Example:* • Have a family meeting. • Talk about how we can get things done. • Get a babysitter or daycare. • Make a plan to manage my time. • Read *Getting the Support You Need*, *Taking Care of the Kids*, and *Fitting Everything In* in this book.		
Other things I need to do.	Use this space to write down the other things you have to do before you go back to school.		

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Carlos's story

My family came to Canada 10 years ago as refugees. It was very hard to leave our country but we had to because of the problems. In my homeland, I ran a successful business selling furniture. But that was all lost when we had to get out of the country.

My wife speaks very little English. She finds it difficult here sometimes. We had more money and a different life before coming here. Our two children, a son and a daughter, were born in Canada. They are good students and have many friends. We have great dreams for them.

With a little English, I was able to get work as a janitor when we first came here. I earned a good living for quite a few years. But I have a weak back. As I got older, being a janitor was hard on me. I decided it was time for a change. I didn't want to end up with a really serious back problem. I also wanted to get back into the business world.

I visited an Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre to find out about English as a Second Language classes. I knew that I could get a job in business again if I could read and write better. I took the classes and did very well. Now I am working at a men's clothing store. It is good to be selling things again. My boss tells me that I have potential to move into a better position.

Maybe I will have my own business again some day!

Am I Ready, Willing, and Able To Be Successful in School?

Your life is probably busy already. Going back to school will make it even busier. There are many things in life that can affect your ability to be successful in school. Here's an exercise to help you identify those things. Read the statement on the left. Then write in a checkmark to show whether you agree or disagree.

EXERCISE

My situation	Agree	Disagree
My attitude		
I know myself well and what I am able to do	○	○
I feel good about myself	○	○
I feel able to do this	○	○
I have a positive attitude toward training	○	○
I am motivated to work toward my goals	○	○
My health		
I feel healthy	○	○
I am free from alcohol or drug problems	○	○
I am able to cope with stress	○	○
My family		
My family is in good health	○	○
I have good child care for my kids	○	○
My family and friends support what I am doing	○	○
I have stable relationships with my family and friends	○	○
My finances		
I know that students often live on a limited budget	○	○
I am willing to live on a limited budget	○	○
I have the money to go back to school	○	○
If I don't have the money myself, I know where to get help	○	○

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My situation	Agree	Disagree
My life as a student		
I have a plan for going back to school	○	○
This is a good time for me to go back to school	○	○
I have transportation to get to school	○	○
I know what is expected of me as a student (regular attendance, good academic progress, following school rules, teacher expectations)	○	○
I know where I can go for help	○	○

If you checked *disagree* for more than a few items, you may want to rethink your decision to go back to school at this time. It doesn't mean you have to give up the idea altogether. It just means there may be some things that could get in your way.

Talk to a counsellor about how you're going to deal with things that might make it hard to do well in school. Make a plan to deal with any obstacles to your success. There are some things that may always be a challenge. But if you decide in advance how you're going to deal with them, it will be easier to be successful in school.

> Coming back to school as an adult? I enjoy the new experiences. It's something I seek out. I got into the classes right away. I know the value of what I'm doing.
>
> *(George, 25 years old)*

What are my fears?

If you've been away from school for some time, you may have some doubts or fears. Some examples are listed here, along with information to think about.

Can I still learn?

You may be thinking, "I'm too old to learn." But adult students have some real advantages when it comes to learning and school. We may take longer to learn things as we get older, but we can actually get smarter as we age! Our life experiences make it easier for us to relate to material. We can often see the connections between things more readily than we did as younger people.

Some people also wonder if they've been out of school too long. Just because you haven't been sitting at a desk doesn't mean you haven't been learning. Your brain is working all the time. You have been learning new skills in nearly everything you do. Living is learning!

You may find that your study skills are rusty or you don't know all the background on a topic. There are resources that can help you find information or brush up on your studying. You can work on your reading and writing. You can get better at math, science and English. You can learn how to take notes and read class materials effectively. Maybe you're not that great at exams. You can get help with that too. There are also resources, including those in this book, that can show you how to set up a study schedule and manage your time.

> I was afraid of rejection from the younger students. After a while, that fear meant nothing. Nobody was rejecting me at all. It was what I was feeling myself.
>
> *(Mary went back at age 40 to take high school courses. She went on to earn a social work degree.)*

What if I hate it?

"Last time I hated school. What if it's just as bad?" For many adult students, going back to school is their own decision. They have decided that the time is right and they have set their own goals. It is probably the same for you. When you were younger, somebody else made a lot of the decisions. Now, you are in charge. You choose your program and your courses. You decide where you want to go. As an adult, you also bring your wisdom and ability to solve problems to being a student. These are great reasons for enjoying your return to school!

> Education means so much to me. I feel this especially now that I'm not in school anymore. I miss it! And I hated it when I was younger.
>
> *(Mary had 23 years of work experience when she went back to take high school classes.)*

What if I fail?

If you fear failure, you are not alone. Most students are afraid of failing a course. As an adult student, you may have a lot at stake. You are an adult with adult responsibilities. You have a certain role in the world. You have your own identity as an adult. Maybe it feels like you'll be losing something if you become a student again. Maybe you're worried you won't do well in school.

Yes, you are taking a risk by going back to school. But it is a risk well worth taking. It's been shown that once adult students settle into school, they do at least as well as other students. And often, they do even better!

> I remember Pauline very well. She was a few years older than me and we became good friends. She had a great sense of humour and was very kind. But what impressed me most was what a great student she was. She took school very seriously and worked really hard. I felt like a lazybones compared to her! Pauline passed with honours and got a great job when she graduated.
>
> *(Cindy, 27, remembers her older classmate.)*

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What if I succeed?

It may sound strange, but success can be scary. It usually means change and change can be hard. If you do well and move on to new things, will your family and friends think you have passed them by? It's only natural to worry about how others may react. But think about it. Your life is going to change whether you go back to school or not. You have decided to get better skills and learn new things. This means that you have more control over how things will change.

You can also take control of your future by planning. Planning means setting goals and deciding how to reach them. It also means figuring out how your choices will affect you. Include your family and friends in your planning so they'll be more likely to support you.

It's important not to let your fear of failure or success overwhelm you. Keep your eye on the goals you have set. You will find it easier to overcome your fears if you admit that you have them. You are not alone. Talk to people about your fears. You may also find it helpful to talk to a counsellor at school or at an Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. They will probably tell you that many other adult students have the same fears you do. They can also give you tips for dealing with your fears.

> At first, going back to school made me feel like a finger in a roomful of thumbs. But you know what? Now that I've been here a while, I feel like I fit right in. I've even got a group that I have coffee with every morning.
>
> *(Richard went back to take pre-technology training at age 42.)*

Will I fit in?

More adult students are going back to school than ever before. You probably won't stand out as much as you think. Even if you do feel older than your classmates, that doesn't mean you don't have a lot in common. You are all trying to make your lives better by learning skills and getting new knowledge.

Try to find students you're most in tune with now. No matter how old or young, there will be other dedicated students among your classmates. There will also be other adult students you can talk to about being back in school. Your school may have an adult students' support group or social club. When you shop around for schools, ask what supports they have for adult students.

You will feel more comfortable at school if you know what's expected of you and if you know your way around. Attend an orientation session for new students or a session for adults going back to school. You will learn a lot about the school. You will also get to meet other new students just like you.

Last but not least—you have a lot to offer your younger classmates. Once they get to know you, they will see how useful your wisdom and experience are. You may find yourself in more demand than ever!

> **I used to have lots of time to spend with my wife and sons. Now that I'm a student, there's just not enough time for everything I used to do. I want to do well in school so I spend a lot of time studying. We all know this will be over soon. And when it is, we'll all be better off.**
>
> *(Brad became an apprentice roofer at age 32.)*

Will I ever see my friends again?

At first, it may seem like you'll never see anyone you know again. So many new faces. So much to learn. So many new things to get used to. It can all be overwhelming—and lonely. If your friends don't really understand what you're doing, it can be even harder. And this can all happen at a time when you need your friends the most.

It is true that you will have less time to be with your friends. Time you used to spend seeing them is now spent studying. But this isn't likely the first time this has happened. If you have ever changed your work, moved or lost your job, you may have had the same feelings of loss. But you were able to get through it. Once you got to know the people around you, you felt a little less lonely. The same thing can happen when you go back to school. Get to know your classmates, your teachers and others at the school.

At the same time, don't forget your old friends. Plan to spend time with them and let them know they are still part of your life. Their support and familiar faces will make going back to school much easier.

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How will this affect my family?

Does going back to school make you feel selfish? Do you feel like you're not being responsible to your family? These are pretty common feelings for adults who decide to upgrade their skills and return to school. It's true that going back to school will affect everyone in your family. You care for your family in many ways. You provide food, clothing, shelter and a lot of love and support. You don't want any of this to disappear because you are going to be a student.

If you earn the money for your family, you probably think that they should come before you. Your interests may not seem as important. But it doesn't have to be a "you or them" situation. You can still provide for your family and go back to school. There will be some sacrifice involved, especially at first. But in the long run, your returning to school will probably make things better for all of you. The whole family will gain from the experience.

If you look after the house and children, you may also wonder how going to school will affect your family life. Are your children going to suffer because you're a student? Your family may be used to you always looking after their needs. Going back to school is going to change that. This will take some getting used to.

Your family will learn to do more around the house and spend more time on their own. They may start to feel more independent and learn new skills of their own. As they become more self-reliant, they may grow to appreciate you in new ways!

Think about why you're going back to school in the first place. It's probably to make a better life for your family. As an important part of your family, you deserve to improve your situation in life. Besides, you're not doing this on a whim. This is a big decision! You have made a plan. You've talked this over with your family and thought about it for a long time.

Chances are, you wouldn't be going back to school if it would be really, really hard on your family. After all, this is the best time for you to be a student again. You've worked that out already. Feeling guilty isn't going to help you or your family. So, instead of feeling miserable, build in time to enjoy family activities. Your family will feel better and so will you.

> **Maybe you're not sure if you can handle school full time. Try taking one part-time course first. You can do it in the evening or on the weekend. This can help you ease into the life of a student and get used to change a little bit at a time.**

How long is this going to take?

It all depends on the kind of educational program you choose. Some programs take a few weeks or months, while others take a few years. Talk to your counsellor about what will work best for you. You can also check out the *Resources* section in this book. You'll find a list of other books and sources of information that can help you decide what program is best for you.

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How will I learn to use a computer?

If you've never used a computer before, you may be worried about how you're going to learn. After all, even your kids may know more than you do! That's not surprising. Most of today's children have grown up learning to use computers.

A lot of today's jobs need some use of computers. Don't be concerned if you don't know how to use a computer now. Most schools have introductory classes in computers. Many will put students in front of a computer and start teaching them the very first day!

Computers also bring to mind the Internet. The Internet is very useful for students. You can do research and find information on nearly any topic.

Computers and the Internet are two main kinds of technology. There are many other types. Talk to your teachers and others at your school about technology. The more you learn, the more opportunities you'll have!

> I remember typing when I was in school. Working on computers was scary at first. It's not so bad now.
>
> *(Indira took high school classes five years after immigrating to Canada.)*

> One of the instructors was very patient with me as she introduced me to my first computer experience. It was a bit intimidating as an adult who had never used a computer before. Not only did she make the experience pleasurable, she took the fear out of writing a test on the computer.
>
> *(Susan returned to school when she was 30. First, she finished high school upgrading. Then she got her diploma in Licensed Practical Nursing.)*

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If you don't own a computer, there are lots of places where you can use one:

- your school—ask about computer labs and the library
- public libraries—most provide free access to the Internet
- Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centres—most provide free Internet access for career planning, job searches and access to learning information
- Community Access Program (CAP) sites—these sites provide affordable public access to the Internet. Phone the Career Information Hotline for the location nearest you. See the *Resources* section for the toll-free number.
- Internet cafés, cyber cafes—provide access to computers and the Internet and usually charge by the minute or hour.
- your friends and family—ask if you can use a family member or friend's computer.

TIPS

- Take the time to figure out if you're ready, willing and able to do well in school. Talk to a counsellor about the challenges you are facing.
- Stay focused on your goals. It's normal to feel afraid. But don't let your fear of failure or success overwhelm you.
- Talk to other students. At first, you may find it hard to fit in as an older student but there are bound to be others feeling the same way. Find these people and get to know them. You'll find it easier to cope.
- Join a support group or club for older students. These can be great places to make new friends and find support.
- Take time to spend with your long-time friends. You will appreciate their familiar faces in the middle of all the change.
- Try not to feel guilty about going back to school. Yes, it may be hard on your family at first but you are probably doing this to help them too. In time, your education will help everyone.
- You are not alone. There are lots of places you can get help and information. This planner is one of them!

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Irene's story

I'm in my fifties. I'm a grandmother with two daughters and four grandchildren.

I'm very creative. I used to be a dance teacher. When I was a kid in school, they passed me because I was tall. I went from one grade to another. But I didn't even know how to write. The hardest thing about that was my self-esteem. I felt ignorant and stupid. I had to pretend that I didn't care.

I was married for 15 years, and then I got divorced. I was depressed after the divorce. When I began to feel better, I came to school and talked to some counsellors. I knew I had to go back to school to get work. So I opened up to a counsellor. When I told her I couldn't write, she said, "I can help you." I was finally assessed with dyslexia. This means that I cannot see letters and words the same way other people can. I get things mixed up. The school helped me learn some new ways to help my reading.

When I first came to school, I was so scared and embarrassed and angry. I don't know if I looked one person in the face the first month. I was over 50 years old and I felt like I was in Grade 1. I was walking the school floors with a 40-pound backpack.

I used to have marks in the 40s and 20s. I was really happy when I got 50. Now, I'm not as happy with that. Sometimes, I even have 80s and 90s. I've been here over two years and now I can write.

I'm finishing my English 30 and Math 13 this year. I feel awesome. My goal is to get the high school courses I need to take the next steps. I'd like to do something in computers and with art.

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Getting the Support You Need

Studies show that the adult students who do the best are those who have lots of support.

As you return to life as a student, you'll want to get support from those around you. This means your family and friends and the students and people in your community and at your school. There are many people, resources and services to help you. If you get off track, there are ways to get back on.

Coping with change

Change, even positive change, can be hard to deal with. When you first go back to school, you may feel completely overwhelmed. On top of all your other roles in life, you will be a student. There are so many new things to learn. There are unfamiliar faces. You don't know your way around the school. Plus you have school work to do. Your life has been turned upside down. You may feel like you have lost control.

Think of all the other changes in your life. You've grown from childhood to adulthood. Remember being a teenager? Your world changed a lot then. Then there were more changes. Maybe you got married. Maybe you had a child. Or you moved or changed jobs. Your life has been full of changes, and you've managed them all.

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Many adults who return to school say that they feel like a much different person when they finish. They have learned new subject areas. They are more confident in their ability to deal with new situations. They have found confidence and energy to keep working toward the goals that are important to them. You will find it easier to manage change if you remember these things:

- Change is constant. Life will bring change, whether you like it or not!
- Change can be hard at first. But you will get used to your new life. You have before.
- Going back to school is a positive change.
- You have decided to make this change. You will have more control over how things turn out.
- You will feel more in control if you carefully plan this cha ge.
- Talk about your feelings and fears. Others have also felt this way and will know what you're talking about.
- Give yourself some quiet time every day. Even five minutes sitting quietly will make you feel more calm and able to cope.
- Keep the familiar faces in your life. There may be a lot of new faces at school but your roots are with your family and friends.
- Keep your eye on your goals. Remember why you are doing this. It will make the challenge of change easier to face.
- Take it one day at a time. Yes, you should look down the road. But you can only do so much at once. Change can be easier to swallow if you break it into bite size pieces.

Going back to school is part of lifelong learning

We keep learning as long as we are alive. As children, we learned how to walk and talk. We learned to tie our shoes. As adults, we learned how to prepare food or drive a car. Learning is lifelong. We may choose to get new skills to do a job. We may have to learn something to improve our home life. Perhaps we just want to learn because we're curious. There are many reasons why we learn.

You've decided to go back to school. It may feel like the end of something. But it isn't. You're just continuing the learning that started when you were born.

> I knew how to slice the work up. One chunk at a time. One day. One week at a time.
>
> *(Ben took pre-technology training when he was 44.)*

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Involve your family and friends

You're going to need the support of your family and friends to do well in school. Get them involved in your plans. Ask them for help if you need it. Talk things through with your family. Plan how things are going to work once you're back in school.

Here are some ideas for getting your family involved *before* you actually go back to school. Discussing things in advance will make your decision to go back to school easier for everyone.

Help with the housework

- **Hold a family meeting to organize family and household responsibilities.**
  If it makes sense for your family, set up a work schedule. But don't just assign jobs to your family. Ask them what they want to help with. Try to rotate the jobs among family members. Don't make people do the same thing over and over again. By changing household jobs regularly, they won't get bored and give up. They will also get to learn something new. Finally, put the family work schedule where everyone can see it. Try the fridge or cupboard door.
- **Lower your standards if you have to.**
  If others are going to help out more, don't expect them to do the job exactly the same way you did. How would you feel if others criticized your work? Gently give suggestions and encourage them to try again. They'll get better with time.
- **Acknowledge the help you get.**
  Let your family know that you appreciate their efforts and that they make a difference. Build in rewards. For example, agree to pitch in together with the family chores Saturday morning so you can spend the afternoon in the park.
- **Involve your family in your studies.**
  If they want to, have them read your papers or quiz you for exams. Talk about what you're studying and talk about any problems you may be having. They may not understand everything that you're talking about, especially on certain topics. But talking things over will help you work it out. You may find a new way of looking at things. Your family will also appreciate that you've asked them to be involved. As a student, you may also become closer to your school-age children. You'll have homework, studying and tests in common. They'll take pride in helping mom or dad out.
- **Reassure your family that you still love them and are interested in them.**
  Try to do this as much as you can. Your family may feel neglected when you become a student, especially when you first go back to school. You will have a lot on your mind and may not pay as much attention to them. Make a special effort to spend time alone with your partner and each of your children.

It may be difficult for your family and friends to support you right away. You may have to ask for help. They can't read your mind and know how you are feeling. Make it easier for all of you by talking to them and asking for help.

> I've always been a take charge kind of person. I could do everything on my own. Or so I thought. When I went back to school, I couldn't be like that anymore. There was just too much going on at once. Now, I'm a lot better at asking for help.
>
> *(Charlene, 49, remembers when she first went back to school.)*

Deal with opposition

Not everybody is going to be happy that you've decided to go back to school. It may take a while for some people to accept that you are going to be a student. They may not take you seriously or may want to talk you out of it. They may even try to make you feel guilty, hoping that you'll change your mind. They probably like you fine just the way you are! They are just as afraid of change as you. They may think you won't need them or want them anymore if you go out and get an education. Or you'll meet new people you like better.

Take the time to deal with these fears. Be honest about how things are going to be once you're a student. Be patient. People may react badly at first when you tell them what you're going to do. Give them time to get used to the idea.

Family

If your family is against the idea, there's no easy answer. You may find it hard to follow through with your decision to go back to school. Yet, if you react by giving up your plans, you may end up feeling resentful and regret your decision. This could definitely affect your relationship with your family. If you try to carry on as if nothing has changed, you could end up exhausted. With no support, you might try to do everything you used to do PLUS all the school work and studying. Who could keep up with that?

With time and patience, many families come around. Your needs and interests are just as important as everyone else's. Do what is most important and only what you can handle at home. Let your family know you still care and try not to feel guilty. You are allowed to go back to school! Look to people outside the family for the support and encouragement you need to go on.

Co-workers, friends or other relatives

If people are still negative, don't talk about your plans around them. If they keep bringing it up, you may want to avoid them for a while. Keep a positive attitude toward your studies. No matter how determined you are, being criticized all the time will make you feel less confident. It may also affect your motivation. You don't need it!

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Be your own support: Advantages of being an adult learner

It's going to take time to get used to being a student again. Don't be surprised if even after the first few weeks or months, you ask yourself, "What am I doing here?" When you're feeling discouraged or overwhelmed, remember your reasons for returning to school. Are they still important to you? If they are, then they're worth the effort you're making.

Compared to the average student, adults have some real advantages. Check the ones that apply to you:

- ◯ **Maturity.** I have an understanding of myself and my needs.
- ◯ **Flexibility.** I have been through many changes so can adapt to new situations.
- ◯ **Highly motivated.** I have had to do a lot to go back to school. I have a definite goal and a lot at stake.
- ◯ **Dedicated.** I can stick with a task until it's done.
- ◯ **Experienced decision-maker and problem-solver.** I have developed these important skills.
- ◯ **Life experienced.** I have background and perspective to add to my studies.
- ◯ **Disciplined and responsible.** I am willing to make sacrifices now for a better future.
- ◯ **Critical thinker.** I challenge new information and don't automatically accept everything I'm told.
- ◯ **Collaborator.** I can create positive relationships with instructors and other "authority figures" at school.

The last time you were in school, you may have still been a kid. Don't underestimate the power of being an adult! Once you get used to being a student, get to know people and get organized, it will get easier.

> After I got over the shock of going back to school, I realized it was different this time. I felt way more confident. I spoke up in class. I shared ideas. I had been in the "real world" for a while and I actually learned a few things that helped in school!
>
> *(Paul, 32, attended a technical institute after doing his high school upgrading.)*

What to do if you get off track

We all feel like quitting sometimes. This can be especially true when you're having some difficulty at school or home. Wanting to give up is a natural reaction to change and stress. The important thing is to realize that you're having some trouble. Then you can look at ways to deal with the problem and get back on track.

Here are some things you can do if you're getting off track in school:

- **Find out what's really happening.** Are you having trouble with a class? Not enough time for homework? Trouble at home? Your babysitter quit? You have an unexpected expense? Once you can identify exactly what's going on, you can work to find a solution.
- **Talk to a school counsellor.** They are used to dealing with all sorts of problems faced by students. They can suggest ways to brush up your study skills or manage your time better. If you have a more serious problem, a counsellor may refer you to another agency for help.
- **Talk to your family.** They know you the best and can help get things going again. Maybe you need more help with the housework. Or you have to study more. Be honest about what the problem is and what you need.
- **Look at your original plan.** Remind yourself what it is you're trying to do. Are there some things you haven't done? Review your goals and believe that you can still get there. Sometimes people want to adjust their plan once they've started school because they've discovered new skills and interest areas. Talk to your school counsellor to make sure your courses are right for where you want to go.
- **Read this planner.** This may sound a bit obvious! But this planner has information on all sorts of problems that students face. Look at the Table of Contents again and see if the answer is here.
- **Ask for help.** You have a lot going for you. You are back at school because you want to make a better life for yourself. You don't have to do it alone.

> I did feel like quitting sometimes. Especially around finals. But I put in so much blood, sweat and tears. The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender. Why did I go through all those trying times only to quit now?
>
> *(Jocelyne finished high school while raising a young son on her own.)*

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Other sources of support

At school

Support from your family and friends will go a long way in helping you do well in school. There are some things, though, that they might not be able to help with. There are many other places you can go for support. Other students, teachers, student advisors, counsellors, case managers, and tutors can all give you support and encouragement. You can also get to know other adult students. Over time, these people can be an excellent source of help, advice and friendship. They're probably going through some of the same things as you are.

You can also talk to your teachers. Ask questions if you don't understand something. If you don't want to ask questions during class, make an appointment to talk to your teacher privately. Teachers have worked with many other adult students. Chances are they've heard similar questions before.

You may also find a number of other helpful resources at your school. Many schools have writing and reading labs or study skills workshops. They may also have special classes on managing stress or making decisions. Some may help students become more assertive or make better use of their time. Most schools can help students with learning disabilities. They can do tests to find out what the actual disabilities are. Programs can be tailored to fit the student. Other tests can find out what computer skills people have. These are just a few examples. There are many resources out there for you. Use them!

> **Everyone will spend time with you no matter what. Walk into the offices and they will make time for you. There are lots of resources. Use them.**
>
> *(George, 25, went back to school after trying to get through high school many times.)*

In your community

There are many places in your community to meet people, expand your contacts and get help. It depends on where you live and what you need. You can ask at your school. You can also look in the business pages of the phone book. Check under "Social Services Organizations" or "Associations."

There are resources at school and in the community to help you manage going back to school. Here, in alphabetical order, are some areas to check out:

- **Career counselling.** For information on planning your career, contact the student counselling office at your school. You can also visit the nearest Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. To find the centre nearest you, see *Resources* at the end of this book.
- **Daycare or after school care.** For information on care for your children while you're in school, see the Taking Care of the Kids chapter in this book.
- **Services for students with disabilities.** Many schools can accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Services will vary by school so contact your school for more information. Your counsellor can also help with any questions or concerns.

- **Employment services.** Many schools give students advice and help about how to get work. Check with student services at your school. There are many advantages to working part time while you're a student. You'll have more money to contribute toward your education and living expenses. Maybe you can practise the English or math skills you learned in school. You can meet new people. Working part time can lead to full-time work during school breaks or contacts for future work. You could also develop some great references to help impress future employers!
- **Financial assistance/aid for students.** There are several kinds of assistance like student loans and student grants. For information on financial help for students, see the *Money Matters* chapter in this book.
- **Financial counselling.** Maybe you need ideas for managing your money or other finances. You can contact Credit Counselling Services of Alberta. They can be reached toll-free at 1-888-294-0076.
- **Housing.** Are you looking for a place to live? The school you're attending may have housing for students with families and single students. Contact the student services office for more information. If they don't have their own housing, maybe they can suggest housing that is close to the school.
- **Legal aid/advice.** If you need information about legal issues, contact the Law Society of Alberta offices at 1-800-272-8839 in Edmonton or 1-800-661-9003 in Calgary. People with lower incomes can sometimes get legal advice at a low cost.
- **Medical assistance.** Some campuses have medical services and/or nurses at school. Make sure you know about health coverage for your family. You may be eligible for assistance under the Alberta Child Health Benefit (ACHB). The ACHB is a premium-free health benefit plan that provides dental, optical, emergency ambulance, essential diabetic supplies and prescription drug coverage for children living in families with low incomes. For more information call 1-877-469-5437 toll-free or visit your nearest Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre.
- **Personal counselling.** Maybe you need help with some personal problems like stress or depression. Contact the student services office at your school. A counsellor may help you directly or refer you to the right agency.

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- **Social contact/meeting people.** Joining a club or group is a great way to meet people at school. Check the student services office for more information. There may be an adult students group, a group for single parents or groups of students who have the same interests.
- **Support for parents.** Being a parent and a student at the same time can be hard. There are a number of parent groups and organizations that help parents. These include Big Sisters and Big Brothers and Uncles and Aunts At Large. Look for these names in the business pages of the phone book under "Associations" or "Organizations."
- **Transportation.** Are you wondering how to get to school? If there is public transit where you live, taking the bus will probably be your cheapest option. Call the bus information line for times. If you can't take the bus, maybe you can join a car pool.

TIPS

- Let your family know that you still love them. Yes, you are going back to school. But they are still very important to you.
- Some people may not be happy you're going back to school. If being around them is too hard, try to avoid them for a while. Focus on your plan to make your life better.
- If you get off track, try to find out what's really happening. Talk to a school counsellor. Talk to your family. Look at your original plan. Most important of all, ask for help.
- The more connections you have with the community, the better. Don't become isolated. There are many places to get help and support. Check out what is at your school. Find out what is available in your community.

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Daniel's story

My home broke up when I was 10 years old. I had a harsh home life. There was alcohol abuse. I had eight siblings. We all ended up in different foster homes. I was expelled from school when I was in Grade 9. I didn't care about school.

For three years, from age 16 to 19, I hitchhiked across Canada. I stayed at hostels. When I got back home, I worked at temporary jobs. That wasn't what I wanted. When I was 21, my mother moved out to the prairies. I came out to live with her. I knew I had to go back to school.

I took a placement test at the college. I told them I wanted to be a cop. But I needed my high school courses. Before, when I was in high school, I didn't know why I was there. It was a whole different scenario when I went back. It was like night and day. Yes, I was scared when I first walked in the door. I was afraid of being rejected again. But the instructors knew what they were doing. We were treated like adults. There was no more "monkey on my back." People wanted to get on with their lives. I never felt like quitting. The only thing that got to me was not having much money or time. But everywhere I turned I was supported. When I hit a brick wall, I knew where to go for help.

By the time I left school three and a half years later, I had changed my goal. I didn't want to be a cop anymore. All during school, I had played my music. I was known as the guy who played the guitar in the stairwells. I ended up traveling across Canada as a singing cowboy. But after a year and a half of the bar life, I knew things had to change. I had to get back on track and get some steady work.

I applied and got a job with the city driving a bus. I'll be celebrating 20 years as a transit employee. I love it. I also do a lot of community service. It keeps me in touch with who I am and where I came from. I get to serve a lot of people. Going back to school gave me a lot more confidence. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. When I first went back, I was at a Grade 6 reading level and in Grade 7 math. When I finished, I got the highest mark on my trigonometry test. I still go to see one of my instructors. He's my guru.

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Money Matters

There's no getting away from it. Tuition and books cost money. There are school supplies and student fees, plus transportation to school. If you have a family to support, you will have more expenses.

Think of your education as an investment. You will have to put something into it. But you will also get something good out of it.

There are two important things to remember about money and school. These are **information** and **planning**. The more information you have, the better your decisions will be. If you have a plan, you'll have an idea of what to expect and you will be able to manage your money better.

Education costs

How much will it cost to go back to school? Here are some things you will need to find out:

- School-related costs such as tuition, books, student fees, lockers, lab fees, equipment, supplies, uniforms, photocopying, typing, transportation and child care.
- Types of financial assistance available such as grants, student funding, bursaries, scholarships, training allowances and daycare subsidies. Many adult students go to school full time. However, if you continue to work and go to school part time, there may be assistance from your employer or union.

You can get a lot of the information you need by visiting schools. Read their calendars and talk to student counsellors and financial aid advisors. Ask about grants and student loans. If the financial aid advisors think you might be eligible for help, check it out. Sometimes these programs change, so make sure you're getting the most current information.

Planning and budgeting

You'll be further ahead in managing your money if you plan ahead and make a budget. Take an honest look at the "ins" and "outs" of your finances. How much money is coming in? How much money is going out?

After you find out how much things cost, you and your family must decide what is essential. This includes food, clothing and shelter, medical costs, and other expenses that must be met. You also need to decide what you can do without. This would include eating out or going to the movies or bowling. Together, you should decide what you could live without for a few months or a few years.

Don't be surprised if members of your family don't agree on what to give up. We all have our own needs and wants. Talk it out. Your friends may be disappointed that you can't afford to go out any more. Explain to them that school is a priority now.

Many times, our attitude is what makes all the difference between feeling good or bad. Most students expect to live on a small budget. They don't feel deprived when they can't spend their limited money on luxuries. They turn living within their means into a lifestyle and make stretching their dollars a challenge. Check with other students for good ideas on free entertainment and cheap treats.

Being responsible

Even if you get financial help with going to school, you must think about how you're going to handle your money. Let's say you get a grant to cover a good chunk of your expenses. No money to pay back. No more money worries. Right? Wrong! You will still have to manage your money responsibly.

Being responsible means making a commitment to follow the obligations that are attached to the funding. It also means understanding the expectations and requirements to receive funding.

Being responsible means thinking ahead, being careful and making tough choices. You have to make sure you have enough money to cover your expenses every month. It might also mean giving smaller gifts for special occasions or no gifts at all. Maybe it means you have to stay home on weekends instead of going out.

For more information about budgeting for school, see the *Education and Training Planner*. See *Resources* at the end of this book for information on how to get a copy.

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TIPS

- There are two things to remember when thinking about money and school. These are information and planning.
- Include people closest to you in your financial planning. See what creative ideas for saving money you can all come up with.
- Find out about education costs such as tuition, books and school fees well ahead of time. Ask what financial assistance is available for adults returning to school.
- Talk to your financial aid advisor at school about any financial assistance that is available through the school or from other sources.
- Check out sources of financial assistance as early as possible. Some bursaries and scholarships have early application deadlines, up to nine months in advance.
- Be responsible. Even if you get a grant to go back to school, you still have to manage your money. Try to look ahead. Be realistic about what things cost.
- Be patient. The financial sacrifices you'll be making while you're in school are only temporary. In the end, you and your family will benefit.

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George's story

I'm turning 26 this summer. I have Type 1 diabetes. I was diagnosed about four years ago. I've had lots of health problems since going back to school two years ago. I've had a number of serious infections and nearly died. It's been very hard being a student. The diabetes slows me down.

I moved out of home when I was 15. It wasn't a great place to live. I had an abusive father. I lived on the streets, got involved with drugs and had a lazy, party attitude. I was also very bitter and angry. When I was 16, I tried to commit suicide. But I got into a program and had lots of therapy. With some help, I learned some good life skills and quit the drugs.

I got a job filming horse races that I worked at for about seven years. The pay was good but I spent all day up in a little tower six feet off the ground. When I was diagnosed with diabetes, I realized that I couldn't continue being so isolated and in a place that was hard to get at. What if I fell down? The entrance was like a trap door. No one could have gotten to me if I had an accident and that's a bad thing when you're diabetic.

I decided to go back to school so I could do something where my life wasn't in danger. It was also time for a change. I planned it all out. I knew I needed to have stability, a budget and a place to live for the long term. When I came to this school, they had a very helpful two-day orientation seminar. There are so many resources at school. I had to take my diabetes into account with everything, so I worked with the school nurse a lot. The school had a lot of computers so I used the Internet to do my school projects. I also didn't know how to do a resumé before. There was a resumé writing service on campus.

I'll be done my high school upgrading soon. I want to go into a university transfer program at the local college. I'm into making options for myself.

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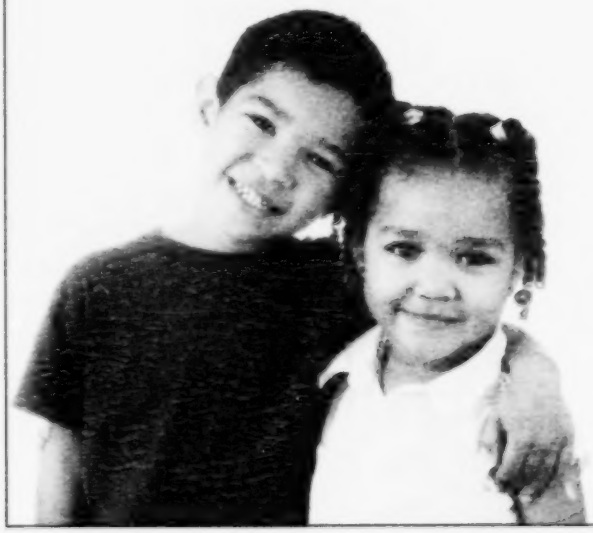
Taking Care of the Kids

If you have young children, you'll have to make child care arrangements. It's a good idea to start looking for the right child care well before you go back to school.

Your child care needs

As you look at your options, think about what your children will need and what you'll need.

- How old are your children?
- What hours of care do they need?
- Where is the care located? Is it close to home? To your school? To your children's school? Which one works best?
- How are they going to get to the place of care?
- How much does it cost?
- Are you eligible for a daycare subsidy?
- What are the late charges? (Some daycares charge as much as $10 for every 15 minutes you're late picking up your children.)
- If you choose a person instead of a daycare centre to look after your children, what are her/his emergency back-up arrangements?



Your child care options

Depending on what you want, what's available and what you can afford, there are a number of options.

- Ask your partner or spouse to help more with child care.
- Have someone come into your home while you're away.
- Take the children to someone else's home.
- Organize a child care co-operative with other parents. This usually involves sharing the babysitting among the parents.
- Take your child(ren) to a licensed daycare centre or a licensed day home. A day home is a private home licensed by the government.
- Use the lunch and after school care program at your children's school if it's available. You could also arrange for lunch at a daycare centre or in someone's home.

You may already know which one of these options you prefer. But don't make your decision without checking into other choices. You may find a good arrangement that you hadn't considered before.

Once you make child care arrangements, you'll still need to have back-up or emergency plans. What will you do if your children are ill or your regular caregiver is on holidays? Maybe you could arrange for a neighbour, relative or friend to look after your children in a pinch.

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Finding child care

Start with people you know. Ask friends, neighbours, relatives and acquaintances. Do they know any good licensed daycares or qualified child care providers? Some of these people may be interested in providing care themselves.

Some schools have daycare centres on campus for staff and students. Be sure to check out this option early. Campus daycares tend to get booked up even earlier than other day cares. Some have very long waiting lists. If your school doesn't have a daycare or you can't get in, maybe other students are interested in babysitting part time. Check with student counselling or the student employment office. Look for notices on bulletin boards around campus. Sometimes local grocery stores have community bulletin boards as well. Many public health centres have a "mom and baby" or "mom and tot" support group that could help you find someone. You can also check out your community newsletter or newspaper.

Alberta Children's Services, a government department, has lists of child care centres, family daycare agencies, and licensed family day homes. They will also be able to tell you if you'd be eligible for a child care subsidy. Children's Services can tell you about emergency child care and after school programs. Children's Services has a guide on how to choose a family day home. See *Resources* at the end of this book for more information.

You can also contact your child's school or the local school board to see what programs are available. Another good place to look for child care options is the business pages of your local telephone book. Check under some of these titles:

- Daycares
- Day homes
- Day nurseries
- Child care
- After school care
- Family day care agencies
- Babysitting services
- Public health centres
- Women's centres
- Churches
- Young Women's/Men's Christian Association (YWCA/YMCA—usually listed under "Associations").

Some of these groups may not provide child care services. However, they may still be able to recommend people or services.

You might also want to consider advertising for child care. It can be paid advertising or free. Put notices for babysitters at the school you'll be attending. Post notices in local stores, high schools, places of worship and community halls. Put ads in community newsletters, college newspapers and local newspapers. The best way to find child care is to let a lot of people know that you're looking.

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Making the right decision: What to look for

You've been searching for a while. Now you have some child care options to consider. Some seem like they might actually be right for you and your child. It's a good idea to check out more than one option. You'll probably need more information before you make your final decision. You'll want to visit the potential caregivers in their homes and check things out. If you're considering a daycare centre, you'll want to go the centre and talk to the staff. You have a right to ask potential caregivers questions so you can make the best decision.

Don't take the first thing that comes along and seems okay. Shop around a bit before you finally make a choice.

How do you decide what's best? Make a list of the things you want to find out. Include any questions you want to ask and things you should look for during the visits. There will be things you want to tell the potential caregiver about your child. Talk about what you expect as a parent. *Write things down.* It may seem strange to go with paper and pen in hand. But in the long run, it will save you time and effort. It will also show that you mean business and are serious about your child. You'll feel more confident that the choice you make is the right one.

Here are some basic things you should look for:

- Is the caregiver warm, friendly, consistent, firm, and caring toward children? Does he or she seem genuinely interested in children?
- Does the caregiver know what children of different ages need and want? For example, do they know that babies have many physical needs and school-age kids need to have lots of activities?
- Is the general atmosphere of the home or daycare centre good? Do the children and caregivers seem to be relaxed and happy? Are the caregivers paying attention to the children?
- Is the potential caregiver serious about taking on the job? Is he or she in a stable relationship? Is anything unusual going on in his or her life that could make him or her unable to care for your children? Having to adjust to new caregivers is hard on children.
- Is the home or daycare clean and safe?
- Is there enough space for children to play, eat and sleep comfortably? Is there a safe place to play outside?
- Does the caregiver charge reasonable rates? Phone around to get prices before your interviews.

> I had an excellent babysitter. It was like Michael's home away from home. It was like he was their kid. The peace of mind helped me get through school.
>
> *(Mary went back to school for high school upgrading.)*

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Questions to ask potential caregivers

Make extra copies and use this sheet when you go to visit potential caregivers. If you think of more questions, write them down and ask them too.

Name of Caregiver _____ Date _____

1. What experience do you have caring for children the same age(s) as my child(ren)?

2. How do you think children should be disciplined? How would you handle a child who is "naughty" or disobeys?

3. Do you have first aid training? How would you handle an emergency?

4. Would you be willing to care for a sick child?

5. Do you have your own children? How old are they?

6. How many other children are you looking after? How old are they?

7. Who is willing to be your back-up caregiver? What experience do they have?

8. What toys and other things do you have for the children? What equipment like high chairs and playpens do you have? Who pays for them if you don't have enough?

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9. Do you provide food or do I need to send it every day?

10. Tell me about a typical day with the kids you look after. What is your routine?

11. Could I have the names and phone numbers of two references that aren't relatives?

12. How much do you charge? (hourly rate, daily rate, monthly rate?)

13. Will you give receipts for tax purposes?

14. What are the pick-up and drop off times? Do you charge extra if I'm late?

15. Could I drop in without an appointment?

Other questions

When you're interviewing potential caregivers, tell them what you expect.
Give them a little information about your child. Tell them about his or her personality, interests, likes, dislikes and fears. Talk about any special problems or needs. Does your child have allergies? Does he or she take medicine? Let them know about the rules you'd expect them to keep. Maybe you want to limit television or make sure your child doesn't eat candy. Talk about how your children will be disciplined. If they'll be providing care in your home, tell them about the rules you have there.

Narrow your choices. Then take your child to visit the daycares or babysitters you're still thinking about.
Pay close attention to how your child reacts to the caregivers and the place itself. If there are other children there, how does she or he react to them? It's normal for your child to feel uncomfortable at first. If you feel one visit with your child isn't enough, arrange a second visit. After that, you should have a pretty good idea how you and your child feel.

You will want to base your final decision on the information you've collected. You also need to weigh how you feel and how your child feels. At first, your child may not want to go to the place you've picked. Give it some time. Many children do get used to things and are happy to go to the babysitter or daycare centre. If your child still doesn't want to go, or you feel uncomfortable, you may want to reconsider your choice. It's okay to listen to your instincts and look for other arrangements.

Nobody can look after my child as well as me.
Have you looked and looked and still haven't found the right place for your child? Is it because none of them are right? Or is it because you really don't want to leave him or her? Yes, you want to go back to school and pursue your goals. But your heart is telling you that you should be at home with your child. These mixed feelings are normal.

Many parents who go back to school (or work) feel a sense of loss. They may feel guilty. They wonder what they'll be missing. It's okay to have those feelings. They won't last forever. *You* are still your child's mother or father. You will still spend time with your child. And because that time is even more important to you, you will both enjoy it more. You will have the most influence on your child's life. Even if your child becomes attached to a babysitter or daycare worker, they will still love *you* the most!

If you're a single parent, it can be hard to juggle school and children. You may feel like you have no time for yourself. Try to make some time. Like other parents, you may want to talk to someone when you're having troubles or feeling guilty or worried. Take a break with a friend, classmate in the same situation, or family member. These people will help you keep things in perspective. It could mean the difference between feeling discouraged or feeling brave and adventurous.

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TIPS

- Make child care arrangements well before classes begin. If possible, try them out ahead of time.
- As you look for child care options, use the people you know. Tell everyone that you need child care. Tell them the arrangement you prefer. You never know who might come up with a good suggestion.
- Contact the Alberta Children's Services general information line about child care and child care subsidies. (For more information, call (780) 422-3004. For toll-free access to any provincial government office, dial 310-0000 from anywhere in Alberta.)
- Arrange for back-up child care for emergencies and holidays.
- As you're interviewing possible caregivers, pay attention to how your child reacts. Notice whether there are other children. Pay attention to how the place "feels."
- If you feel comfortable with what you have chosen, your child will probably feel the same way once he or she gets used to the change.
- If your child really seems unhappy and you feel something isn't right, look for something else.
- Stay in touch with your babysitter, daycare or after school staff. Ask how things are going. Be sure to drop in unannounced once in awhile to see for yourself.
- Ask the questions you need to ask. Don't be afraid to find out what you need to know.
- Don't feel guilty or let your kids make you feel guilty. Deep down, know that both you and your child will benefit from this experience. Your child is learning to be more independent. And you are growing as a person.

Jocelyne's story

I spent the first 18 years of my life in a small community. I was 15 and in Grade 10 when I got pregnant. I talked to a counsellor and was told I'd have to deal with the truant officers or go to a home for unwed mothers. I was devastated. I talked to my parents and ended up going to a home for unwed mothers in the city. I tried correspondence school. It didn't work out. I tried regular school after I had my baby. That didn't work out either.

I gave my first baby up for adoption. At 17, I was pregnant again. Right after my son was born, his dad split. That summer, my brother packed my son Alex and me up and moved us to the city to live with him and my other brother. I worked in a few dead-end jobs. When my last job ended, I decided it was time to go back to school.

It was very hard that first day. Very overwhelming. I was one of the younger people. But, my mind wasn't like a 20 year old. I was a full-time student and a single mom. It was very confusing. But I knew in my mind that finishing school was my ticket to a better future for Alex. And I knew I'd go on to have more education. It was my personal statement to those who didn't believe in me. The hardest thing about going back was my pride.

But I did have a long-term plan. I knew I wanted to go into business. After my first year of the upgrading program, I started looking at what I needed to get into a business diploma program. I used the calendars from the technical institute. I went to their information sessions. After I took my high school classes, I went into the business program. That lasted two years. I got a job as soon as I graduated. I worked for someone else for a few years. I opened my own business with one of my former bosses almost four years ago.

I've built my education. Now, my biggest dream is to build our company. Looking back over my life, I'm so grateful all of this happened. My life is better. Most important of all, Alex's life is better.

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Fitting Everything In

Now that you're going to be a student again, will life get easier? No. It's going to be even more complicated. You won't be able to do everything you did before and study too. But you can get through your studies if you organize your life and use your time well.

> **I'm trying to balance the forces in my life all the time. I have a girlfriend with two kids. I'm part of their life. I try to be a role model. The pressure is there to be in their lives along with doing school work, thinking about my career and building a resumé.**
>
> *(George, 25, wants to go onto college after finishing his high school upgrading.)*

Organizing your life

The key to being a successful student is planning. Figure out how to set your priorities and organize your activities. Even before you go back to school, you can start organizing your life by keeping a record of everything you do. Write down how much time everything takes. Notice what time of day you do things.

Doing this for a couple of weeks will help you discover how you're using your time. Don't forget to include shopping for food, meal preparation, eating, travel time, and spending time with your family and friends. Also include housework, yard work, time for fun and sleeping. Once you have made a list of what you do, you can make some decisions. Ask yourself these questions:

- When am I going to go to classes and study?
- What are my other priorities? What's important to me now?
- What could I stop doing or do less often?
- What activities could I ask others to help with?
- What activities could I combine to save time?

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Manage your time effectively

You've looked at it and know what's important and what you have to do. All that remains is figuring out *when* you're going to do it. Here's how you can manage your time more effectively once you're in school:

- Use your school planner or calendar and keep it with you all the time. Use it to write down your classes, assignments, lists and appointments. Also use the calendar to write down everything else you need to do. Include family appointments and events. Write down birthdays or special occasions. By keeping all this information in one place, you will save time and feel confident that you're not forgetting something.
- Take the time to plan and organize. Take a few minutes each day to look over your schedule. What are your upcoming assignments? Do you have any tests? Do you have to meet with someone? Set goals and deadlines for yourself. Pick due dates, even for pieces of assignments or things you have to do at home.
- Write a *To Do* list every day. Try to do this at the same time every day. Write down things you can finish that day, such as handing in an assignment or studying for 30 minutes. Also include any family activities. For example, maybe you have to attend a parent–teacher meeting or buy groceries.
- Write a *Done* list everyday. This will help you see what you have accomplished and see the balance in your life. As your "done" lists grow, you will get closer to your goal. You might even want to write down things like "spent time with my daughter" or "finished my English paper."
- Break large jobs into smaller jobs. For example, if you have a paper to write, use one day to come up with a topic. Use another to do your research and so on. Make a list of everything you need to do for big assignments. Cross things off as you do them. Checking things off will make you feel closer to your goal. For more information on studying, see the next chapter of this book.
- Block off time in your planner for major activities. Include time alone to study or to be with your family. If someone wants to meet with you at that time, you can say you have an appointment.
- Don't jam your day full of activities. Leave some time for yourself. Give yourself time to think or have a quick walk to clear your head. Have a quiet cup of coffee. You may feel silly writing down "my time" in your calendar, but do it! You'll feel less stressed.

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- Plan time with your family every day. It can be a bedtime story, a short game or time together in the evening. Take time with the people who matter the most. They'll appreciate it and so will you.
- Keep your home organized. Looking for things is a big time waster. Before you go back to school, clean out things you don't use or need any more. Find a place for everything you use. Always put it back in the same place when you're finished using it.
- Combine more than one activity. If you take the bus to school, use that time to study a little or organize your day. While you're in the shower, think about your upcoming assignments. While you're watching television, you can fold laundry or pay bills. There are many creative ways to save time if you get into the habit.
- Don't be a perfectionist. If the house isn't spotless, don't worry about it! If your assignment isn't perfect, that's probably okay too. Do your best and get it done. Often, when we try to be perfect, we end up doing nothing. It's better to just do it and not worry about being the best all the time. There will always be people more or less skilled at some things than you.
- Learn to say no. You may have a hard time turning people down. Get in the habit of politely saying no. You are a student now and have to stick to your own priorities.

> I didn't know I was a perfectionist until I got here. I don't like perfectionists! Now, I leave the housework so I can spend time with my family. I still have my kids first. Then my grandkids. My family. Then school.
>
> *(Olga is in her early fifties and hopes to complete her high school soon.)*

Sample weekly schedule

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am	Sleep in	Wake up, get ready and eat breakfast. Catch the bus.					Sleep in
7 am							
8 am	Personal Time	Class	Class	Lab	Class	Class	Clean house
9 am		Class	Study	Lab	Study	Class	Do laundry
10 am	Time with family/friends	Study	Study	Class	Class	Class	
11 am		Class	Class	Class	Class	Class	Exercise
12 pm	Lunch	Lunch	Class	Lunch	Class	Lunch	Lunch
1 pm		Class	Lunch	Class	Lunch	Class	Shopping
2 pm		Class	Class	Class	Study	Class	Time with family/friends
3 pm	Study	Study	Errands	Study	Study	Study	
4 pm	Study	Take children to library, appointments and other commitments					Study
5 pm	Home to unwind, make supper, eat and clean up.						
6 pm							
7 pm	Study	Time with friends/family			Grocery shopping	Time with family/friends	
8 pm							Relax or study if necessary
9 pm	Recreation		Study		Recreation		

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Create your own weekly schedule

Create your own weekly schedule. Put in the activities that fit with YOUR life.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am							
7 am							
8 am							
9 am							
10 am							
11 am							
12 pm							
1 pm							
2 pm							
3 pm							
4 pm							
5 pm							
6 pm							
7 pm							
8 pm							
9 pm							

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TIPS

- Figure out your priorities and use that information to organize your life. Your priorities can change.
- Use an appointment book. Many schools supply these to students. Write down everything, even things like buying groceries.
- Post a calendar where all family members can see it. Ask people to write their own activities on the calendar if they can. This will help the family stay organized.
- Recognize your limits. You might not be able to do everything you'd like to do. But you'll be doing the things that are most important to you.
- Encourage your family to do some things for themselves. If they are able, they can help by taking on new responsibilities. It may take a while for them to get used to it, but they will.
- Be on the lookout for short cuts. There are always quicker, easier ways to do household chores. Go shopping when it's less crowded or send someone else. Visit with a friend while you're walking the dog. Or take your partner with you and have some "together" time. Catch up on the day with your family while you're doing housework.
- Make routine medical appointments and major shopping trips for "down" times. These include times after exams or during school breaks.
- If you know when your studies will be finished, post that date where you'll see it every day.
- Aim for a balanced life. Eat properly and get enough rest and exercise. Make time for yourself.
- If you need help, ask for it. No one should do it all alone.

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Mary's story

I'm 53 years old. I decided to go back to school when I was around 40. I'd been working as a hairdresser for 23 years. But standing on my feet all day was starting to take its toll. I always had poor circulation in my legs and was starting to develop very serious varicose veins. My doctor told me I may develop skin ulcers. It was time to think of a type of work where I wouldn't have to be standing so much.

I had always wanted to become a social worker. One of my customers told me about a career decision-making program. I took the program and found out about all sorts of occupational choices. I still decided I wanted to be a social worker. I knew it was a risk but I decided to take it. I knew I was a good listener because many of my customers really opened up to me.

I started in a high school upgrading program about 12 years ago. When I first walked in the door of the college, I was scared out of my wits. Why was I there? What about studying? I wanted to quit many times. But I didn't give up. I didn't have just myself to worry about. I was a single parent of a young teenager. I couldn't set myself up for failure. I had a child to set an example for. I didn't want to let down the other people who had supported me either.

At first, my parents were worried about me. They wondered why I was giving up the security of a job. But once they saw that I was determined, they were positive and supported me. When I was at the college, my new "colleagues" were my classmates, instructors and counsellors. I met with one instructor all the time. There was a counsellor I also talked to. I left behind my old life. I finished my high school courses after two and a half years.

The first time I applied to the community college for the fall social work program, I was rejected. That's the story of my life. I cried. I threw my books. I threw the reject letter. I had set a goal of graduating from the social work program when I was 45 or 46 years old. I called the director of the social work program and asked her what I could do to get in the next year. I worked on my weak areas. I applied again and graduated from the diploma program in two years. I didn't get a job right away but I kept in touch with people I knew from school. I had also applied to a university social work program. I was rejected from that twice! I finally graduated from university with my Bachelor of Social Work when I was 50 years old.

I'm now a social worker. I love where I am.

Would I do it again? Darn right I would!

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Getting your School Work Done: Effective Studying

To study well, you have to be organized and determined. At first, it'll be hard work. But once you learn some good habits and establish a routine, it will get easier.

Your first days back at school might feel like a hectic blur. You will be adjusting to school and other changes in your life. During the first class, your teachers will tell you what is expected. They will talk about the goals of the course and homework assignments. They will also tell you how your work will be graded.

When you first start studying, you may feel nervous or unsure of yourself. You really won't know how you're doing until you get some feedback. Try to relax and remember that you're just getting started. If you keep up with the work and make sure you understand the material, you will do just fine.

If you do start having problems with your school work, ask for help right away. Talk to your instructor or work with a student who is doing well. Talk to a student counsellor. See if you can get a tutor. The pace at school can be very fast and it can be hard to catch up if you fall behind. If you don't understand something, ask for help.

Try not to compare yourself to other students. Everyone moves along at his or her own pace.

> **I had a network of friends in the cafeteria. We'd say, "Let's get our homework done before we go home." They were supportive and helped me solve problems.**
>
> *(Jocelyne finished high school when she was 22.)*

Plan to spend one to two hours studying for each hour of class time. For example, if you spend 20 hours in class each week, you'll have to study 20 to 40 hours to stay on top of things. The actual time will vary depending on the course.

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Using your study time well

Here are some suggestions for using your study time well.

- **Set up a study schedule.** Getting into a routine is very important. You should stick to a study schedule for a number of reasons:
  - It helps you get everything done.
  - You'll find it easier to keep up.
  - You'll find it easier to deal with unexpected events or emergencies.
  - You'll feel more in control.
  - You'll save time in the long run by being organized.
  - Your family and friends will get to know your routine and will be able to adapt to it.
  - It can free you up to enjoy other things.
- **Study every day.** Try to study often, for shorter periods of time. Even half an hour will make a difference. This usually works better than studying for long periods once or twice a week. You learn more, keep up with the work and are better prepared for tests and surprise quizzes. If you can work in study time every day, do it.
- **Study during your best hours.** Try to build in some study time when you're most awake and alert. Do the more difficult tasks then. Save easier work for when you're tired or busy. Take breaks and stop before you are totally exhausted.
- **Organize your study times.** Write down everything you must do. This includes homework, papers and due dates. Organize your time to ensure that you meet the deadlines. Mark them on your calendar or in a student organizer. If you like lists, write everything down and tick things off as you complete them.
- **Don't get bogged down.** At first, you may not be very good at guessing how long your work will take. Never spend more than one or two hours on any subject at one time. Getting away from your study area and doing something active will help you concentrate better.
- **Use bits of free time that you have between classes or riding the bus.** Use the "down time" you have waiting in line or at the doctor or dentist's office. Carry a book, do your notes in point form. If you have them, carry a tape recorder and headphones with you. Even 10 or 15 minutes are enough time to get something done. You can review, memorize lists, plan an outline, ask yourself questions or scan a chapter.
- **Include regular reviews when planning your study schedule.** Review your notes while they're still fresh in your mind. If you can do this the same day, it's even better. Daily or weekly review is a great way to get ready for exams.
- **Have a flexible study schedule.** You will have unexpected events and emergencies. There will be assignments that take longer than expected. Make study time your priority. If you have to do something else, make up the study time you lost.
- **Try to study at school.** It's easy to be distracted at home by a partner, kids, chores, the telephone or the TV. If you use time before, between or after classes to study, you will have more time with your family in the evenings.

Motivating yourself

If you know where you want to go and how you're going to get there, you can stay motivated. When you're tired, feeling frustrated and wondering why you are doing this, look at your goals again. You'll see how studying will help you reach them.

Need help to be motivated? Try these suggestions:

- **Compete with yourself.** Work to improve your concentration span, study skills or how long it takes you to do something.
- **Reward yourself.** Say to yourself: "When I finish this paper, I will do something nice for myself." It can be as simple having a cup of tea or going for a walk.
- **Tell another person what you're trying to do.** If you know that someone is going to ask you, you may feel more motivated to get the work done on time.
- **Keep a positive attitude.** When you're at school, studying is part, or even all, of your job. Look at it the same way you look at any other job. Have a positive attitude and do the job head on.
- **Start studying with enthusiasm and energy.** Even if you don't feel that way, pretend that you do! You may find that after a while you really are enthusiastic. Even the subject you find boring and difficult could turn out to be interesting. You could find that it relates to some of your past experiences. It could even have practical applications for your life right now.
- **Be realistic.** Expecting too much of yourself can be a problem, just like expecting too little. Try to avoid both extremes.

Everyone puts things off sometimes. Here are some suggestions for getting started with studying:

- Break your studies down into smaller, more manageable bits of work. Do them one at a time.
- Commit to studying for a fixed amount of time or until you have finished a specific job. "I won't quit until I've read this chapter," or "I'll keep going for half an hour."
- Remind yourself of what happens if you keep putting off studying. You will have even more work down the road. You could do poorly or even fail. You'll continue to worry and feel even more pressure.

Are you having trouble staying focused on your school work?

Getting started isn't always a problem. Sometimes, just keeping at it is difficult. Here are some suggestions for keeping your focus:

- Set up a place to study where you feel comfortable and alert. Make sure there are no distractions. You need a quiet place that you can use all the time. It should be away from the television, radio and telephone. You should have a desk or table, a comfortable chair and good lighting. The room shouldn't be too hot or cold. If you can study at home *sometimes*, try using the kitchen table. Wait till everyone else is finished using it. Make sure all the dishes and food are cleared away. Ask people to leave the room. Use your book bag or backpack as a portable "desk." Keep your school work and supplies in it all the time. This way, you'll always know where everything is. If your book bag is too small to hold everything, even a box will do.

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- If you don't have a place in your home to study, you may have to do most of your studying at school. Use the school library or study hall.
- If you can't concentrate for very long, start with short sessions more often. Work at focusing for that length of time. After a while, you should be able to have longer study sessions.
- Every time you find your mind wandering, bring your attention back to your work.
- If other things keep popping into your head, write them down. This will free up your mind for your studies. You can think about these other things later.

Writing tests: Coping with the worry

Others are always grading us. We get rated at work, we take driving exams and we go to job interviews. When we were children, maybe we tried out for sports teams at school. We took tests. Maybe tests were hard for you and you think that it will be the same now.

All students worry about exams. In fact, some tension keeps us alert. However, too much fear or worry can make it hard for you to learn or remember. It can get in the way of you doing your best. Here are some ways you can lessen your anxiety and feel more confident about tests:

- **Know the material.** Get ready for exams well ahead of time. From the start of the course, set aside time for regular review. Near exam time, make time for extra studying.
- **Find out from the teacher what kind of exam it will be and what it will cover.** Will it be an essay? A short answer test? Multiple choice? You can get more information about the kinds of exams in study skills books in your school library. These books can also tell you how to study for the different types of exams.
- **Get copies of exams from other years.** These are often available to students. Ask your instructor. Also look at the exams that you wrote earlier in the course. Where could you improve?
- **Think of tests as a progress report.** They are not meant to judge YOU as a person. They are meant to find out how much you know about a certain subject.

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- **Don't make the test too important or not important enough.** You should take it seriously. But it doesn't count for everything. Each exam only counts for part of your whole grade.
- **Get to know your classmates.** Reviewing with other students can be very helpful. Even if you like to study alone, you may find it comforting to know that others are in the same boat. They have to study for the same exam and are concerned about how they'll do.
- **Learn how to relax.** There are some specific ways you can get rid of stress. Talk to your student counsellor about ways to reduce stress. There may be a class you can go to or a book you can borrow. Get enough exercise.
- **Be realistic about your goals.** If you expect to get very high marks and don't, you may feel very bad. You may want to give it all up. Set goals that you think you can actually achieve.
- **Believe in yourself.** You have gone back to school because you want to make your life better. If you prepare yourself and follow these suggestions, you should do just fine.

Dealing with failure

If you do fail an exam or assignment, keep things in perspective. Your whole future doesn't depend on how you did on one exam or piece of homework. Everyone fails sometimes. Remind yourself of things you have done well and succeeded at.

Instead of getting angry with yourself, find out how you can do better. Talk to your instructor. You may need extra help in the course. Maybe you should spend more time studying or you need to be more organized. Perhaps you have to brush up on your test taking skills or study skills. Are you trying to do too much at once? Smart people learn from their mistakes. With practise and experience, you will do better. The important thing is, don't give up!

Using the Internet as a study tool

The Internet is a great place to find information on many topics. You'll be able to do research for school assignments. But be careful about getting sidetracked doing research on the Internet. If you don't already know, talk to your instructors about how to use the Internet without wasting time at sites that don't relate to your school work. With a little help, you can be one of millions of people around the world who use this great learning tool!

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Susan's story

My desire to become a nurse came from the many months I spent in hospital as a child from ages two to 13. I came to respect the nurses who cared for me and I vowed at a young age that I would give back to the profession that had given me so much.

But childhood dreams had to be put on hold as I ran away from an alcoholic home when I was 17. I married a few months after my 18th birthday and had my eldest son a short time later. My dream would have to wait again because I had new responsibilities—a husband and a young son.

I began working as a school caretaker when I was 20 and did that for about 10 years. My last position was as head custodian for a large high school. I was making good money in that job but I still decided to leave.

The desire to be a nurse never left me. I began planning. Now was my chance. My sons were eight and 12 and my husband had a stable income. So at 30 years of age, I quit a job I loved to pursue my dream.

Since I never finished high school, I had to upgrade to meet the entrance requirements for the practical nurse program. I upgraded my courses through Alberta Distance Learning. I started with one course first to get used to being a student again. When I finished, I registered for the practical nurse program at the college. I cashed in my pension and applied for a student loan.

Right from the first day, I knew in my heart that I was finally realizing my dream. I threw myself into my studies. Nursing was always in my blood, but it was the college staff and instructors who helped me to be successful. My instructors encouraged me when I doubted myself. They inspired me through their own compassion and dedication to be the best I could be. More than anything else, they taught me to believe in myself and that anything was possible.

I fulfilled my dream and became a licensed practical nurse. I now work as an educational assistant in the practical nurse program. I'm at the same college I attended. I feel privileged to teach and mentor other students.

One last thing!

You're nearly done! But before you put this planner away, go back to the beginning again. Look at the first exercise, My Back to School Plan. Check off the things you have already done. Pat yourself on the back for your progress. If there are still some blank spaces, fill them in. If you still have questions, go looking for the answers. Reread the parts of this planner that you're really interested in. Read the *Resources* section. Your completed plan will help keep you on track as you return to school.

You are not alone. There are lots of people who can help you return to school successfully. The stories in this book tell how real people dealt with their own challenges and fears. They are all different people with their own dreams. But they shared something in common. They stayed focused on their dreams and made plans. They looked to the future and took positive steps to reach their goals. With help and support from others, they worked toward a brighter future for themselves and their families.

YOU can do the same!

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Resources

If you live in Alberta, check out the resources listed here for helpful information and services.

Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII) service centres

There are AEII service centres throughout Alberta. They have career, education and employment information and resources to help you. Call the Career Information Hotline for the office nearest you.

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Call the Hotline for answers to your questions about:

- career planning
- occupations
- ways to find jobs or work
- education options
- e-Resumé Review
- information and referrals
- links to services in your community.

Phone:
1-800-661-3753 toll-free in Alberta
(780) 422-4266 in Edmonton

Access for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing:
1-800-232-7215 for message relay service
(780) 422-5283 for TDD service

Hours:
8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday
E-mail: **info@alis.gov.ab.ca**

Alberta Children's Services (Child care Information)

Contact Alberta Children's Services for information about child care and child care subsidies in Alberta. They also have guides for choosing the right day home or daycare. To find the office nearest you, contact:

Alberta Children's Services
General Information Line: (780) 422-3004
Alberta Children's Services website:
www.child.gov.ab.ca

For toll-free access to any Alberta government office from anywhere in Alberta, call 310-0000.

Credit Counselling Services of Alberta

Credit Counselling Services of Alberta helps Albertans learn how to budget, get out of debt, use credit wisely and get the most from their money.

Phone:
1-888-294-0076 toll-free
(403) 265-2201 in Calgary
(780) 423-5265 in Edmonton

E-mail: **info@creditcounselling.com**
Website: **www.creditcounselling.com**

Financial Assistance

- Information on financial assistance for students, including loans, grants, scholarships and bursaries, is available through your AEII service centres. Call the Career Information Hotline for the office nearest you.
- You can also visit the Government of Alberta's ALIS website at **www.alis.gov.ab.ca**. Click on the Learning tab, then click on Financial Assistance.

- Post-secondary institutions have student awards offices that can give you information on student loans. They have student loan applications. The awards offices also have information on other financial help for students such as grants.

High School Transcripts

A transcript is an official record of school marks. If you attended high school in Alberta, you can get your transcript from Alberta Education. There are several ways to do this.

- Through the Internet at **www.education.gov.ab.ca** and go to High School Transcripts.
- In **person**, or by **mail** or **fax:**
  Transcript Unit
  Alberta Education
  2nd Floor, 44 Capital Boulevard
  10044–108 Street
  Edmonton, Alberta
  T5J 5E6
  Fax: (780) 422-2137

You **cannot** order transcripts by phone. However, it's a good idea to call the Transcript Unit's automated telephone line at (780) 427-5732. This way, you can make sure that you include all the right information in your request. If you are calling from outside the Edmonton area but within Alberta, you can call toll-free by dialing 310-0000 and entering (780) 427-5732. There is a $10 charge for each official transcript.

Government of Alberta Call Centre

For general inquiries on Alberta government programs and services phone 310-0000 toll-free in Alberta or visit the website at **www.services.gov.ab.ca**.

Libraries and Bookstores

Before you go back to school, gather all the information you can. Ask students what books have helped them. Learn more about the library system. If you can't find what you're looking for, ask for help. Librarians help people find what they need and can also help you use the Internet.

Websites

If you know how to use the Internet, there are lots of websites with information on school topics. If you can't use the Internet at home, go to your local Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. You can also use the public library or an employment agency.

www.alis.gov.ab.ca
This address will get you to information about careers, learning and employment. For direct access to specific sections of the ALIS website, use these addresses:

- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/edinfo**
  This will get you to the section called **EDinfo**. It has information on education and training programs in Alberta.
- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo**
  This will get you to the section called **OCCinfo** where you can get information on more than 500 occupations. You can also get connected to information about who gives training for occupations.
- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/learning**
  This will get you to information on student assistance. You can even fill out applications for student loans on-line. There are also links to post-secondary institutions. You can register for programs and courses on-line.

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www.tradesecrets.org
This address will get you to information about apprenticeship in Alberta.

www.canlearn.ca
This is a national website. It has information on learning and education opportunities outside of Alberta.

Books

Here is a list of books and planners with other helpful information. If you live in Alberta, Nunavut or the Northwest Territories, these books are free. Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII) publishes them all. Albertans can order by calling the Career Information Hotline. (See Career Information Hotline earlier in this section for phone numbers.) You can also order these books through the Internet. Visit **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop** for more information.

Career Planner: Choosing an occupation
This workbook is intended for people who have done little or no career planning. By doing exercises, conducting research and making decisions, you can move closer to selecting a specific occupation. The planner includes information on various occupational options and also lists other sources of information.

Change and Transitions
This is a workbook for people who are experiencing change. It combines information, exercises, practical tips and strategies to make the most of change.

Education and Training Planner
This book will help the person who already has a goal in mind. It talks about the education and training programs in Alberta and how to get more information. It provides sample questions to ask counsellors and discusses budgeting and financial planning.

Finding Out: How to get the information you need to make the choices you want
This book shows you how to do research and get information that will help you make career decisions.

Time to Choose... a post-secondary education program
This book has lots of information on education programs at Alberta colleges, technical institutes and universities.

Job Seeker's Handbook
This introductory guide gives step-by-step information on how to find work opportunities. It is written for people who do not have much work experience.

Money 101: Budgeting basics for further education
This book talks about financing your education. It covers setting personal goals, figuring out how much your education will cost, suggestions on how to pay for it, student loans and budgeting.

Positive Works II
This book helps you see what can be accomplished by changing negative attitudes and beliefs into positives. It's full of exercises and tips on how to use those positive things in all areas of your life like goal-setting, learning, improving relationships, coping with stress, and getting and keeping work.

Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting basics
This workbook will help you to budget, cut down on our costs and increase your dollars. It also has information on other programs and services to help you.

Volunteering: How to build your career by helping others
This book describes the many benefits of volunteering as a way to build your career.

Notes

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Feedback

We'd like to hear from you...

Adult Back to School Planner

Date _____

Send your comments to the addresses or fax number provided at the bottom of this page:

What specific information in this publication did you find useful? How did it help you?

_____

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How could we improve this publication? What was not useful?

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Do you have any suggestions for other information or other publications that would be of value to you?

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Please Return this Form to

People, Skills and Workplace Resources

Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

Mail: 12th Floor, South Tower, Capital Health Centre,
10030–107 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4

or

Fax: (780) 422-5319

To view a complete list of our publications, visit **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop**

Explore your options on-line for Career, Learning and Employment information

www.alis.gov.ab.ca

- Career planning
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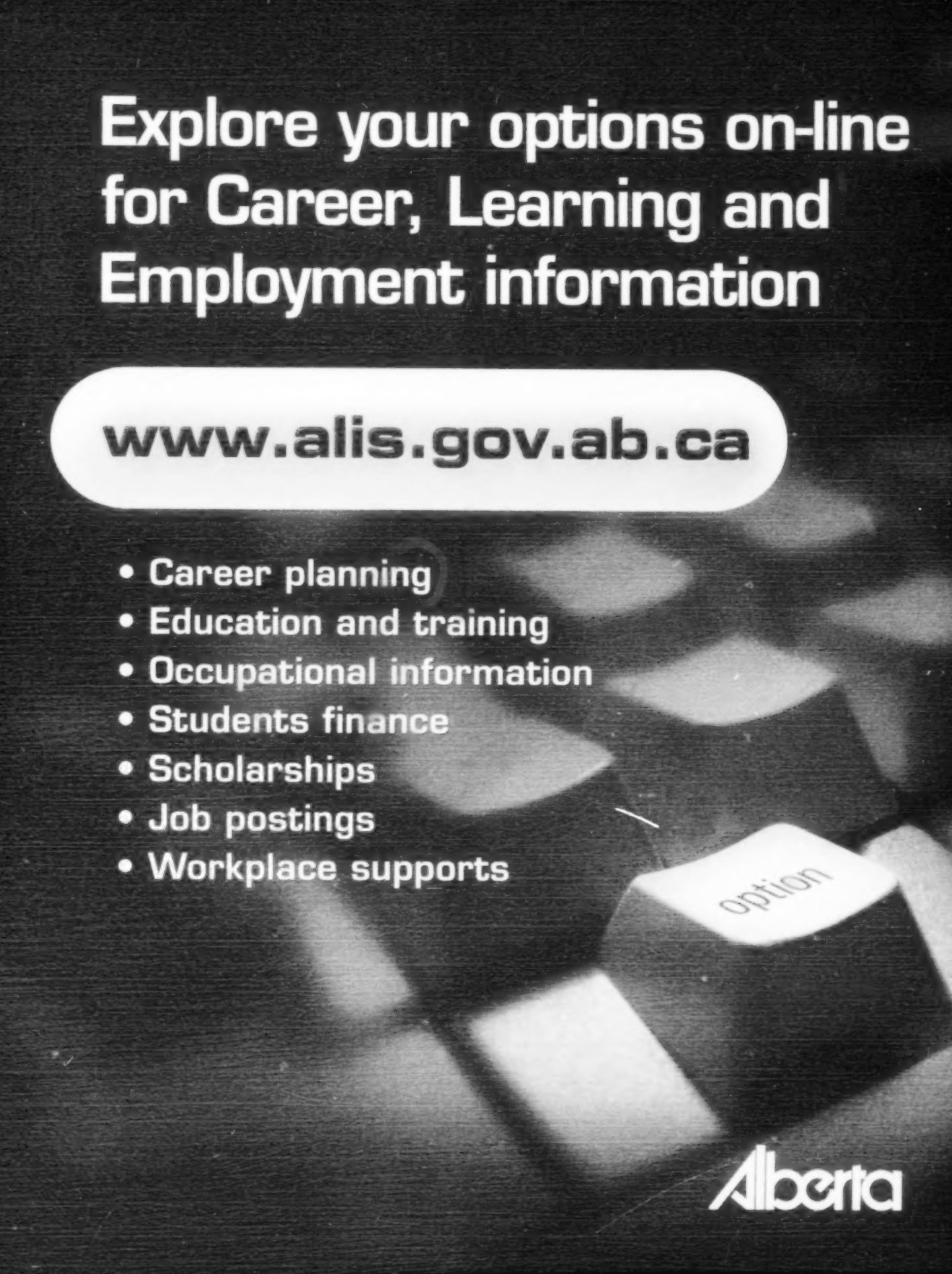

Alberta

Adult Back to School Planner

If you are preparing to go back to school, this easy-to-read booklet will help you develop a plan for a successful return. From suggestions on getting support from family and friends and developing effective study habits and time management to tips on money matters to finding child care, this planner will guide you through this exciting transition.